THE

Moral and Religious Cabinet.

"To aid the cause of Virtue and Religion."

Vol. I. SATURDAY, MAY 7, 1808. No. 19.

AN ACCOUNT OF MR. THOMAS SYMONS.

(Concluded from page 280)

MR. SYMONS's last illness, which was occasioned by a cold he caught on the 3d of December, 1805, was not attended by any alarming symptoms, for more than a fortnight after his seizure; nor were his friends at all apprehensive that the weary wheels of life were soon to stand still. He was now seriously ill for almost the first time in his life; and this illness, as might be expected, considering his very advanced age, soon terminated in his death. The following particulars, relative to the state of his mind, during a few of his last days, are such as I either witnessed myself, or had from his pious nieces, and other friends who attended him. Of his nieces, I may be allowed to say, their affectionate attention to him was unceasing, and highly exemplary. Concerning these, he said to me, a few days before his death, "As I lost my own children, I took these to bring them up. I took care of them, when they could not take care of themselves, and see how God recompenses me. They take care of me now, that I am unable to care for myself." Thus, *he that lendeth to the Lord, it shall be paid unto him again;* and, *blessed is the man who provides for the poor and needy,* for *God will deliver him in the time of trouble.*

In consequence of the cold which Mr. S. caught, as before mentioned, he continued increasingly indisposed, though generally able to attend less or more to his business, till the 30th of January, when his cough became very troublesome, and prevented his getting any regular sleep. Friday, January 31, finding himself much worse, and being apprehensive that the time of his de-

parture was not very distant, he went into the Dye-House; and, calling all the men together, began to exhort them, in a very affectionate and impressive manner, to avoid sin, and to give themselves to God through Christ, and live for eternity. In the evening of this day, I called on him, and found him sitting in his chair, though much debilitated. We spoke together for some time, on the things of God, and he was greatly revived. His mind was calm, and his confidence in the mercy of his Maker steady; but he expressed great earnestness to be fully renewed in the image of God, observing, "Nothing less than the whole image of God, stampt upon my heart, can satisfy me."

Saturday, February 1, he was considerably worse; so much so, that his family thought him dying. Having recovered a little strength, he began to exhort all around him to cleave to the Lord; and to his relatives, he said, with great fervour, "Take the advice of a dying man, and never leave the fold of Christ."

Sunday, Feb. 2, I visited him again. He appeared to be considerably harrassed with temptations, respecting his experience in divine things. He said, "Though I have not doubted of the goodness of God to me for 50 years, yet I have not had that strong assurance, and rapturous joy, which many others have been favoured with." We then joined in prayer to God, that he would satisfy his mind in this respect, and afterwards he appeared contented and easy.

Tuesday, Feb. 4, he took wholly to his bed, and was exercised with strong pain. I have already remarked, that Mr. S. had enjoyed uninterrupted health for more than 90 years: consequently, not knowing what sickness and pain are, he was wholly inexperienced in that state of suffering to which the Providence of God had now called him. Indeed, the state seemed so new to him, that he appeared in the situation of a man suddenly and unexpectedly beset with enemies, from whom he found it impossible to flee, and against whom he saw it vain to contend. Hence he used

many expressions, which I could easily discern were the result of inexperience in the school of affliction; but, which to others, who knew not his state, might have indicated a degree of reprehensible impatience, and a want of due resignation to the Divine will. But this really was not the case. His mountain stood strong; but, not having been inured to pain, he had now that whole lesson of suffering to learn, in a few days, which most others acquire gradually, through the whole course of their lives.

Many pray for an exemption from suffering. Such persons know not what they ask. It is better to carry a heavy burthen, by separate parcels, while our strength is comparatively unbroken, than to be obliged to stoop under the whole load at once, when the keepers of the house tremble, and the natural force is abated. However, what God does is well done. Mr. S. in this *untried* state, was upheld by the power of that God, in whom he had trusted. His strength was proportioned to the burthen he was called to bear. As this was a day of great conflict, so it was a day of considerable consolation. The wounding and the healing power were alternately evident. Every pang his body felt, and he felt many, appeared to be accompanied either by some very consolatory promise, or some act of resignation to the Divine will. A few of his expressions, in illustration of the above observation, it may not be improper to record. Being in a great agony, he cried, "O! that my time were come, and my thread of life cut; but thy will be done. Lord Jesus, cut the thread of life, and take me to thy arms, or give me patience to bear my afflictions. Lord, this is more than flesh and blood can bear. God of Mercy, I know not what to do: direct me, for thou shalt be my Guide." Addressing himself to his nieces, he said: "Pray to the Lord to take me, for I long to be gone: but heavenly language is heavenly love. I am afraid I offend my God, by wishing to be gone."——At another time he exclaimed, five times successively, "Now, my Lord, I am ready." Being asked, if he would take any refreshment, he said, "I want no food but heavenly food; but I wish to go to

heaven to see my wife and dear little children." There was so much of the affectionate parent and tender husband, in these expressions, that I wish them to be particularly noticed.—To those who have never been blest with these relations; and who, consequently, can know little of the charities of human life, they may appear misplaced; but whoever has been a husband and a parent, in the order of the Divine Providence, and has been called to carry the body of the wife of his youth to the grave, and bury the hopes of his family with the children, in whose stead he would have gladly given up his own life, will do honour to the principle by which Mr. S. was actuated; and rejoice in the consideration, that these endearing ties, which, under God, are the balm of life, though partially dissolved for a time here, shall, in that state of endless life and perfection, be found reconnected, in a bond of indissoluble duration.

He appeared now to be exceedingly weak, and scarcely able to breathe; yet he continued in prayer; and, as his strength would permit, exhorted all that were about him. He said, "I have many, many promises, but have not strength to relate them;" and then, addressing himself to his nieces, whom he always considered as his own children, he said, "The Lord bless you, my dear children, and let not the foot of pride come against you, and may he keep you all in the narrow way, for Jesus Christ's sake." Though, with the violence of the pain he endured, the sweat dropped off his face, and his whole frame was agitated; yet his resignation to the Divine will was unshaken, and the expressions of it uncommonly strong. "I would be satisfied," said he, "were I to suffer ten times more; or were he even to send me to hell, I think I should praise him, for I know he cannot do wrong. Lord, deliver me in which way thou seest best." He then prayed for his family, friends, servants, and enemies, and all mankind; and concluded with saying, "O! Lord! I commit my body, soul, and all my concerns into thy hands. Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight, and I shall praise thee to all eternity." It is worthy of

remark, that, several times, during his illness, he requested to be left alone, that he might commune with God in private; and, at one time, requested particularly a handkerchief to cover his face. A friend coming to see him, said, "Sir, I had a particular desire to see you: I trust you have a hope full of immortality." He replied, "Yes, I have; but I cannot converse much, because of my great weakness."

It is also worthy of remark, that all who visited, and prayed with him, found great enlargement of heart, and every time of prayer was *a time of refreshing*, coming from the presence of the Lord. Indeed, there was so much of God's goodness manifested to him, and so much affection and humility displayed by him, that no friend left his bedside, without considerable reluctance. For those who visited him, he often prayed in a particular manner, and for their families, usually, saying, "The Lord of heaven and earth bless you and your's, and grant that not a hoof of your families may be left behind: no, not one hoof." One morning he said to his niece, "When will the service of the Church begin?" and then repeated some of the prayers, which were applicable to his own state; adding, "I think, these words are in the service:—"Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me into glory." To a friend, he observed, "I shall be like Sampson, do more in my death, than I have done during life." Finding his life drawing near a close, he desired that Mr. Colling, his leader, should be sent for, that he might give him an account of the state of his mind. In the mean time, he related his happy experience to his niece, and his man James, and said, "Should I die before Mr. Colling comes, he may be perfectly satisfied respecting the state of my soul."—Being asked, if he would take a little wine, he said, "No more wine, till I drink it new, in the kingdom of God."

Some time after, as his lips appeared to move, it was thought he was desirous of saying something; but, on his niece coming up

to him, she found him repeating his favourite Hymn: "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath," &c.

Some days before he died, he requested the attendants, who had sat up with him all night, to join with him in prayer. This was early in the morning; and he joined so earnestly himself, especially in singing those words:—

"My Jesus to know, And feel his blood flow,
'Tis life everlasting, 'Tis heaven below,"

That he was heard above one pair of stairs: on which one of the family supposing him to be dying, rose up, came down stairs, and said, "I am come to rejoice with you."—"Oh!" said he, "We have had a comfortable time in prayer: what a blessing it is to have such attendants, at such a time as this: I was very ill just now, but am rather recovered again: my dear, go to rest: the Lord bless you!"

On seeing a relative standing by his bed side, he looked up, and, with great confidence, said, "My Jesus to know," &c. and added,

"Weary of this world below,
I would to my Jesus go:
Help me, Jesus; give me wings,
To fly away from earthly things."

During the whole of his illness, he was remarkably sensible and recollected, and answered every question with great propriety and pertinence; so that many were astonished, considering his advanced age.

Thursday, Feb. 6. After a very restless night, he desired to be helped to a little weak tea, which, having received, he earnestly craved the blessing of God upon it; and, when he had drank, devoutly returned hearty thanks to the Fountain of all good.—Soon after, a friend coming in, he said, "I am unable to speak to you now, but I shall soon converse with angels. Come, Lord Jesus, send thy angels to carry me to Abraham's bosom." During the

following week, he had very little respite from pain, and was worn to almost a mere skeleton. It was really surprizing to see life, and a sound mind, remaining so long in a body so emaciated. The thread of his life was spun out to the smallest conceivable fineness.

The evening before he died, I visited him, for the last time, and found him on the confines of eternity. He could discern no object, but was perfectly sensible. I exhorted him to hold fast his confidence in God, and to continue looking unto Jesus: on which he grasped my hand with his, I may truly say, skeleton fingers; and squeezing me, with a force which I thought his exhausted nature could not have possibly exerted, he said, "I will endeavour to hold him, as I now hold you." He spoke but little more, as his feeble body was rapidly sinking under the pressure of his infirmities; but continued to breathe shorter and shorter, till his blessed spirit silently escaped to the mansions of eternal joy.—This was on the morning of February 13, 1806, in the ninety-second year of his age.

I have already remarked, that Mr. S. occupied no situation, either in civil or religious society, that could render him very conspicuous to public view; but the Church of God knew him well, and held him in high estimation. For the prosperity of the work of God, he laboured ardently, and his heart and hand were in every good work. He was one of the first Trustees of the Chapel, in the City-Road, and subscribed considerably towards the building of it. The year in which a large debt on it was to be discharged, he exerted all his power in the work, persuading the people, who frequently attended, and bore no part of the expence, to take seat tickets, and even offered to carry them about himself. When the unfortunate law-suit took place, between the Trustees and the Society, he saw it his duty to espouse the cause of the latter, which he did in the most steady, yet temperate manner, labouring to the utmost of his power to promote peace. Those from whom he differed, and against whom he voted in the whole of that business,

were among the foremost to acknowledge, that he was a man that endeavoured to follow peace with all men.

He was a warm friend to the poor. I have the fullest authority to say, he rose early, and took rest late, and often denied himself and family what might have been deemed even needful, that he might be the better able to supply the wants of the indigent. Of him, it might be truly said, he never turned his face away from any poor man. He was a pattern of diligence and frugality: he was always employed. He considered that man as highly criminal, in the sight of God, who idled away his time on the six days, as he who did his ordinary work on the seventh. He not only laboured, that he might be able to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but he *toiled* that he might have something to bestow on the work of God, and on the poor. In his dealings, he acted as one who always felt himself in the presence of God, and knew he must give an account of all his actions. Therefore, he never knowingly wronged any man of a shilling, and never took the advantage of another's necessity.

His affectionate attachment to, and constant attendance on the means of grace, were truly exemplary. He was scarcely ever absent from the Sabbath and week-day preachings; and, for 40 years, he regularly attended, at five o'clock in the morning, first at the Foundery, and afterwards at the City-Road. When more than fourscore years of age, the coldest or wettest morning in the depth of winter, never prevented him from offering his early sacrifice in the Temple of his God. I have no doubt this very circumstance greatly contributed to his regular health, and very protracted old age. Would to God that our Valetudinarian youth would lay this to heart. Through effeminacy, and needless self-indulgence, they are incapable of those exertions, which would be honourable to them, as members of civil and religious society; and, when only at the meridian of life, are often older in constitution than Mr. S. was at fourscore years and ten. But what arguments can persuade a lover of his bed, that it is useful, healthy, and praise-

worthy to rise betimes? Mr. S. however, experienced the happy effects of it, both in body and mind. When, by his last affliction, he was necessarily detained from the ordinances of God, he had not the bitterness of reflecting, that he had neglected them in the time of health. How many make sad work for compunction of spirit, on a death-bed, by neglecting the ordinances of God, when in health and vigour. May God give the Reader that portion of Divine wisdom, by which alone Time can be duly appreciated, and properly redeemed!

On a review of the whole of Mr. Symons's character, I feel no hesitation to propose him as a model of steady, affectionate piety, unimpeachable integrity, and successful industry; and can say to the Reader, who wishes to honour his Maker, to do good among men, redeem his time, and save his soul, "Go thou, and do likewise."

THE METHOD OF WALKING WITH GOD.

IF we sincerely desire to WALK WITH GOD, we must, with fervent and humble sighs, beg for divine help; at the same time, carefully watch over our thoughts, words, and actions; in every thing we see, do, or omit; upon all that passes both within and without us; shunning, with the greatest circumspection, all occasions of sin; such as needless company, idle conversation, vain imaginations, evil reasonings, perverse disputations, &c. continually keeping our hearts in the fear of God, which is a fountain of spiritual strength; having the eye of the mind bent towards him in reverence and love. For he who neglects these divine and powerful supports, will be left, as a city open on all sides, an easy prey to worldly-mindedness and sensuality, and will finally be brought to ruin. We must, therefore, exert our utmost strength against those things which we are conscious have the greatest hold of our affections; that our hearts being preserved in liberty, simplicity, and purity, free from uneasiness and distraction, may not be

ensnared by any evil desires, which would dissipate the spirit, engross the affections, and darken the whole soul.

2. Let us be particularly careful to shun all occasions of superfluous discourse; watching over our words, that we utter nothing but what may tend to the Glory of God, and the good of our neighbour. Our blessed Saviour himself has declared, that in the Day of Judgment we must give an account for every idle Word, Mat. xii. 36. Wherefore when we speak, let it be done with a heart full of love, in meekness of expression, and with deep humility.

3. Carefully avoid all occasions of strife; rather suffer loss than contend. Maintain thy peace with God; and be solicitous not to give cause of stumbling to any one. Have also a special care over thine eyes, for it is by them that thou art in danger of being drawn into temptation, and exposed to many hurtful snares.

4. In all trials and contradictions look up to God, earnestly begging for strength, courage, and patience; so thou mayest, by persevering in the exercise of faith, be enabled to bring thy body into subjection, 1 Cor. ix. 27. Those who habitually practise these precepts, have good reason to hope that the Spirit of God will abide with them, and that they shall experience his mighty operations in every faculty of their souls.

5. The operation of the divine power is greatly prevented, and the love of God extinguished, by knowingly suffering sin to prevail over us: such as pride, hatred, anger, and fretfulness; presumption, self-will, evil desires, and an inordinate attachment to children and relations; the desire of riches, of a name amongst men, indulgence in the gratification of our appetites, and the like. If these things are suffered to prevail, they carry away the thoughts and affections from GOD, and the soul becomes so attached unto them, that we are brought into miserable bondage. The creatures then possess that seat, which God alone ought to

occupy in the heart. Alas! how many things do we suffer to take hold of our minds; and how many things have we in our intentions to do, wherein we neither see, nor seek God!

6. There is a strong inclination in most people to live in a manner agreeable to their natural will; to gather abundance of wealth, and live in affluence, without ever making sincere and upright enquiries whether their conduct be agreeable to God, or tends to his Glory.

7. There are others who appear virtuous in the sight of men, and yet are still under the power of evil habits, which they conclude to be but small failings, not thinking themselves bound to forsake them, but looking upon their state as good, because they abstain from gross sins. Nevertheless, these people, not being willing to give up their hearts wholly to God, the work of Religion is hindered, and these very trifles which they indulge themselves in, and of which they think that God takes no account, become a wall of separation between God and them. Ah! how great will be the lamentation of an infinite number of people at the last Day, when the thoughts of all hearts are laid open; and all shall clearly see, whether in the course of their lives, they have chosen to serve God or themselves.

8. But that which is very prejudicial to us, and prevents our close walking with the Lord, is a desire to serve both God and the creatures, at one and the same time: This, the Lip of Truth has declared to be impossible, Mat. vi. 24; for in the degree that the soul permits itself to be filled with the love of the creatures, in the same proportion it is emptied of God, and of his Grace. We must therefore divest ourselves of all anxious solicitude after terrestial things, and contract the habit, by constantly exercising faith, of serving God in spirit, and in truth. It must be allowed, indeed, that the beginning is difficult; but through divine help, all things will become easy: And God will never refuse his aid, if we humbly and penitently seek it. Our Kingdom is not of this

World; therefore, we may, with the utmost propriety, at least, take as much pains, and expose ourselves to as many inconveniencies for the attainment thereof, as an infinite number of people do, to possess the honours and delights which belong to this world; and which are sought after by its votaries, with inexpressible toil, patience, and danger.

AFRICAN HOSPITALITY.

MUNGO PARK, the ingenious traveller, on his return from exploring the interior of Africa, related the following instances of kindness and hospitality extended to himself by a female of that poor, despised, and persecuted people, the Negroes.

Having to wait the orders of an African king, relative to his departure from a village called Sego, where he arrived, after having been harrassed and stripped by the Moors, himself and horse being nearly exhausted, he turned his horse loose, and sought shelter from a storm of thunder and rain, under a tree.

At length, as night approached, that kindness and humanity inherent in the female sex, to which he had often been indebted on former occasions, came to his relief on the present. A poor negro woman returning from the labours of the field, observed that he was wet, weary and dejected: and, taking up his saddle and bridle, told him to follow her. She led him to her cottage, lighted up a lamp, procured him an excellent supper of fish, and plenty of corn for his horse; after which, she spread a mat upon the floor, and said he might remain there for the night. For this well-timed bounty, our traveller presented her with two of the four brass buttons which remained on his waistcoat.

Mr. Park adds other particulars concerning his benefactress, which heightens the picture. He relates, that the good woman, having performed the rites of hospitality towards himself, called in the female part of her family, and made them spin cotton for

a great part of the night. They lightened their labour by songs; one of which must have been composed extempore, for our traveller was himself the subject of it; and the air was, in his opinion the sweetest and most plaintive he ever had heard. The words, as may be expected, were simple, and may be literally translated as follows: The winds roared, and the rain fell: the poor white man, faint and weary, came and sat under our tree: he has no mother to bring him milk; no wife to grind his corn." Chorus. "Let us pity the white man, no mother has he," &c. Simple as those words are, they are natural and affecting; and contain a curious allusion to the state of manners in savage life, in which the woman performed all the domestic duties.

ON BENEVOLENCE TO CAPTIVES.

TO rejoice at the destruction of our enemies is a foible grafted upon human nature, and we must be permitted to indulge it; the true way of atoning for such an ill-founded pleasure is thus to turn our triumph into an act of benevolence, and to testify our own joy by endeavouring to banish anxiety from others.

Hamti, the best and wisest emperor that ever filled the throne, after having gained three signal victories over the Tartars, who had invaded his dominions, returned to Nankin in order to enjoy the glory of his conquest. After he had rested for some days, the people, who are naturally fond of processions, impatiently expected the triumphal entry, which emperors upon such occasions were accustomed to make. Their murmurs came to the emperor's ear. He loved his people, and was willing to do all in his power to satisfy their just desires. He therefore assured them that he intended, upon the next feast of the Lanterns, to exhibit one of the most glorious triumphs that had ever been seen in China.

The people were in raptures at his condescension; and, on the appointed day, assembled at the gates of the place with the most

eager expectations. Here they waited for some time, without seeing any of those preparations which usually precede a pageant. The lantern, with ten thousand tapers, was not yet brought forth; the fire-works, which usually covered the city walls, were not yet lighted: the people once more began to murmur at this delay, when, in the midst of their impatience, the palace gates flew open, and the emperor himself appeared, not in splendor, or magnificence, but in an ordinary habit, followed by the blind, the maimed, and the strangers of the city, all in new clothes, and each carrying in his hand money enough to supply his necessaries for the year. The people were at first amazed, but soon perceived the wisdom of their king, who taught them, that to make one man happy, was more truly great, than having ten thousand captives groaning at the wheels of his chariot.

A DOUBLE MINDED MAN IS UNSTABLE IN ALL HIS WAYS.

ST. JAMES, IV, 8.

HOW ridiculous and inconsistent is it, to be halting between two opinions!—A double minded man is unstable in all his ways:—Inconstant and unsteady, fickle and changeable, he wishes to serve God and be saved, and at the same time wishes to serve satan and his own lusts: He hopes to be happy in the next world, but cannot endure the thoughts of parting with the sensual pleasures of this: His religion, since nothing he does can be uniform, has its ebbs and flows; it sometimes rises up like the sun, but soon like the moon puts on different aspects; sometimes in the increase, and as often in the wane. Thus acts the man whose heart, or eye of his mind is not single; and whom the apostle paints by an elegant, yet familiar comparison: "He that wavereth is like the wave of a sea, driven by the wind and tossed."—The representation is taken from the good old Jacob, who tells us that his son Reuben, was "unstable as water:" the parts of which, in their

own nature, are restless and unquiet; there is always in it a readiness to move and shift its place. To take away this inconsistency, and fix his choice on the one thing needful; the heart of the double-minded man must be purged from all secular and low aims, and exercise in such means as best conduce to that end:—His heart must be pure. Purity or singleness of heart, in opposition to double-mindedness, is that simplicity of intention whereby we give up ourselves entirely to the service of God and religion, without proposing or allowing ourselves in any ends inconsistent with it.—Lord, grant that we may see the folly of the double-minded man in pursuing opposite ends; that this singleness of heart which is peculiar to the virtuous and holy, may appear our greatest wish dom:—Shew us the uneasiness of pleasuring opposite ends, that this singleness of heart may appear the most pleasureable:—Convince us of the sinfulness of aiming at opposite ends, that this purity of heart may recommend itself to our practice, as necessary to our eternal salvation:—O give us grace that we may no more seek to mix heaven and earth together, nor endeavour to unite opposite interests, to reconcile Christ and Belial and to establish a communion between light and darkness; but with simplicity of heart and undivided affections, and with willing minds, without reserve or partiality, or worldly ends, may we love and serve thee, and draw nigh to thee in holy duties, that thou mayest draw nigh to us in ways of mercy.

MARRIAGE.

IN marriage be thou wise: prefer the person before money, virtue before beauty, the mind before the body: then thou hast a wife, a friend, a companion, a second-self, one that bears an equal share with thee, in all thy toils and troubles.

Chuse one that measures her satisfaction, safety, and danger, by thine; and of whom thou art sure, as of thy secretest thoughts: a friend as well as a wife; which, indeed, a wife implies; for she is but half a wife that is not, or is not capable of being, such a friend.

Poetry.

ODE TO PEACE.

COME, Peace of mind, delightful guest!
Return, and make thy downy nest
  Once more in this sad heart:
Nor riches I nor pow'r pursue,
Nor hold forbidden joys in view,
  We therefore need no part.

Where wilt thou dwell if not with me,
From av'rice and ambition free,
  And pleasures fatal wiles?
For whom, alas! dost thou prepare
The sweets that I was wont to share—
  The banquet of thy smiles?

The great, the gay, shall they partake
The heav'n that thou alone canst make?
  And wilt thou quit the stream
That murmurs through the dewy mead,
The grove and the sequester'd shed,
  To be a guest with them?

For thee I panted, thee I priz'd,
For thee I gladly sacrific'd
  Whate'er I lov'd before;
And shall I see thee start away,
And helpless, hopeless, hear thee say—
  Farewel! we meet no more?

NEW-YORK: Printed and Published by JOHN C. TOTTEN, No 155 Chatham-street, at TWO DOLLARS per year, payable quarterly.